

Praise goes a long way at work

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It might sound like common sense, but it's amazing how many bosses ignore the fact that, if their employees feel appreciated, recognised and part of the company, they are less likely to leave.

David Fagiano, chief operating officer of global training company Dale Carnegie & Associates, was in Ireland last week to discuss employee 'engagement' with business leaders.

The company was founded by Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Fagiano argues that this feeling of being engaged in the company is more crucial than pay increases in retaining staff.

A survey by recruitment consultant, Robert Walters showed that the main reason people in Ireland consider a new job opportunity is because of a lack of recognition from their employer (50 per cent) and to continue up the career ladder (24 per cent). Just 14 per cent said they would leave because of their pay.

"That would be a fairly typical statistic in mature economies. In economies with hyper-growth, such as China, where people are being offered jobs with more money every couple of weeks, it is a different story," Fagiano told *The Sunday Business Post*.

He said there were three types of workers - engaged, disengaged and actively disengaged. The disengaged work the required hours, do the work and go home, but have no connection to the workplace. The actively disengaged are more dangerous and feed negativity, undermine the work of others and express mistrust and animosity.

"When you have both of those types of workers in your organisation, it can do a lot of damage," said Fagiano. He said that \$350 billion was lost in the US every year due to lack of engagement. On the other hand, people who are engaged believe they make an impact, would recommend it as a good place to work and get more than just wages from working there.

"Irish companies could save hundreds of thousands, even millions, of euro through introducing engagement to retain staff and maximise their output. Without close attachments to the workplace, people feel alienated and will usually seek greener pastures elsewhere.

"The statistics are absolutely amazing. For example, engaged employees are 87 per cent less likely to leave, and sales people who are engaged make 28 per cent more revenue than those who are not. Company leaders have to realise that employees want more than pay increases and they need to get the picture if they want to retain the top talent."

He said employee attitude was dramatically influenced by what their boss does or says. If managers praise workers and take steps to reward their achievements, workers feel their efforts matter.

"But if managers are distant, seldom straying from their offices or from meetings, and provide feedback only when it

is negative, then the manager's behaviour is creating a toxic workplace, rather than an engaged workplace."

How to improve employee engagement

- * Create a corporate culture that encourages engagement
- * Measure employee engagement periodically
- * Develop action plans by organisation, department and individual to address the root causes of problems that lead to employee disengagement
- * Hold people accountable for demonstrating progress in building engagement
- * Reward those who demonstrate progress in building engagement

Leaders who build the right climate will ...

- * Focus on identifying individual strengths
- * Recognise achievement, rather than envying it or trying to steal the credit for it
- * Develop people for engagement, as well as for knowledge and skills
- * Provide encouragement when people seem to be unhappy or disappointed
- * Seek employee ideas about the company
- * Involve all employees in setting goals and objectives

Do not assume that ...

- * This is an issue that can be handed to the HR department without significant line management involvement
- * Higher salaries alone will increase engagement
- * Employee work ethic, or lack of it, is the root cause of problems with engagement. That amounts to blaming the worker, rather than having management accept accountability to do something to improve engagement